

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6650

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CO

SUBJECT: CARLOS LLERAS CONCEDES; PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN BEGINS

REF: BOGOTA 1886

1. FURTHER ELECTORAL RETURNS, 93 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, HAVE NOT APPRECIABLY CHANGED THE VOTE RELATIONSHIP IN REFTTEL.

AROUND 75 PERCENT OF THE ELECTORAL APPARENTLY SHOE NOT TO EXERCISE THE FRANCHISE. DATA AND ANALYSIS WILL BE REPORTED SEPTTEL.

2. CARLOS LLERAS CONCEDED DEFEAT TO JULIO CESAR TURBAY THE EVENING OF FEBRUARY 28 " GIVEN THE RELATIVE INFERIORITY" OF VOTES IN HIS FAVOR AS AGAINST THOSE OF TURBAY. LERAS WENT ON THAT HE WAS "PERSONALLY NOT ABLE TO SUPPORT THE SOLUTION THAT A MAJORITY OF THE PARTY ADOPTED UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES AND UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF PROCEDURES THAT I DENOUNCED AND FOUGHT FOR MANY MONTHS." LLERAS TOLD HIS SUPPORTERS THAT THEY WERE "FREE TO FOLLOW THEIR CONSCIENCES REGARDING TURBAY, THE PARTY'S OFFICIAL CANDIDATE." HE DESCRIBED HIS BATTLE TO "TRY TO ALERT THE PARTY AND THE COUNTRY TO THE DANGERS POSED BY SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CORRUPTION." HE ALSO REFERRED TO "THE RESULTS WHICH, TO THE SCANDAL OF GOOD PEOPLE, OCCURED

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IN SOME REGIONS, FRUIT OF THE CORRUPT MACHINES WHICH OPERATED FOR MONTHS THROUGH THE GOVERNMENT OR WITH ITS TOLERANCE."

3. CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE BELISARIO BETANCUR KICKED OFF HIS CAMPAIGN FOR THE PRESIDENCY WITH A PRESS CONFERENCE ON FEBRUARY 27. IN REMARKS DESIGNED TO ATTRACT LLERAS' FOLLOWERS, MOST OF WHOM PROBABLY SHARE THE ABOVE VIEWS OFTEN EXPRESSED BY LLERAS,

BETANCUR PAID HOMAGE TO THE FORMER PRESIDENT AND PROMISED, IF ELECTED, TO FORM "NOT A PARTY OR SECTARIAN GOVERNMENT BUT A NATIONAL GOVERNMENT." IN A CAMPAIGN SWING THROUGH MANIZALES ON FEBRUARY 28 AND ARMENIA ON MARCH 1 BETANCUR AGAIN LAVISHED PRAISE ON LLERAS AND ANNOUNCED HE HAD -GRASPED LLERAS' BANNERS."

4. LIBERAL CANDIDATE TURBAY, IN AN EFFORT TO HEAL HIS PARTY'S WOUNDS, HAS MADE STATEMANLIKE DECLARATIONS CALLING FOR RECONCILIATION AND FOR THE LAYING ASIDE OF RANCOR, ESCHEWING TRIUMPHALISM, AND WELCOMING LIBERALS OF ALL TENDENCIES TO HIS RANKS. SOURCES CLOSE TO TURBAY TOLD EMBASSY OFFICERS THAT TURBAY WOULD OFFER HIS CAMPAIGN MANAGERSHIP TO FORMER FINANCE MINISTER AGUDELO VILLA, A PRESTIGIOUS, INDEPENDENT LIBERAL, TO BROADEN TURBAY'S APPEAL TO DISSIDENT LIBERALS. SOME LLERISTA LIBERALS HAVE ALREADY PLEDGED FEALTY TO TURBAY BUT THE MAJORITY WILL PROBABLY FIND THIS A DIFFICULT STEP TO TAKE.

5. THE MAJOR LIBERAL DAILIES PREPARED TO TAKE POSITIONS ON CANDIDATE TURBAY. EL TIEMPO'S MARCH 1 EDITORIAL, IN A DENSE CLOUD OF PROSE ON "THE MISSION AND DESTINY" OF LIBERALISM, BEGAN TAKING TO LINE UP WITH TURBAY WHOM THEY HAD OPPOSED FOR MANY MONTHS. EL ESPECTADOR, PERHAPS ON ANOTHER COURSE, IN AN EDITORIAL ENTITLED "WE DON'T CHANGE OUR OPINION" AGAIN DEPLORED "IMMENSE ABSTENTIONISM, DUE TO THE DISCONTENT AND SKEPTICISM OF THE COLOMBIANS, BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE ACTS" OF THE LOPEZ ADMINISTRATION. "WE BELIEVE THE LIBERAL PARTY IS IN DANGER. WE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OBSERVE WITH ALARM THAT IT HAS BECOME A COLLECTIVITY ACCUSTOMED TO THE CLIENTELIST SYSTEM, DEPENDENT ON BOSSES, INTERESTED IN PETTY PATRONAGE, UNFORTUNATELY DIVORCED FROM THE REALITY OF THE COUNTRY." SOURCES CLOSE TO EL ESPECTADOR REPORT THAT THE PAPER MAY DECIDE NOT TO SUPPORT TURBAY'S PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN AND SIMPLY SIT THIS ONE OUT.
DREXLER

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